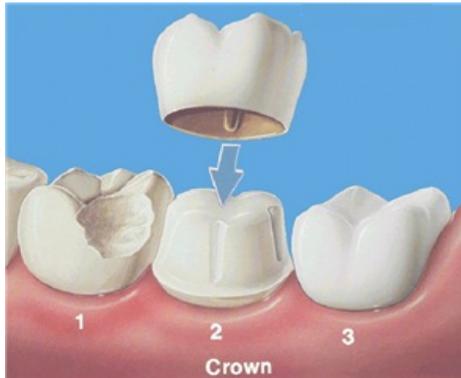


## Dental Crowns



### What are crowns?

Dental crowns are restorations that protect damaged, cracked or broken down teeth. A crown strengthens your existing, damaged tooth so as to preserve its functionality. Dental crowns are also commonly known as caps (because a crown sits over your existing tooth, covering the entire outer surface).

### Why might I need crowns?

If your tooth has undergone significant decay and there is not enough tooth structure remaining to support a filling or an inlay and maintain functionality. If a large portion of your tooth has fractured and it cannot be built up using traditional composite bonding techniques.

If you have a large cavity and opt for the additional protection a crown offers to your tooth over a large composite filling or an inlay. If you have had a dental implant to replace a missing tooth, a crown will be fitted to the abutment of the titanium implant.

Following root canal treatment, a crown is often needed to strengthen the tooth.

If you grind your teeth and have a poor diet, acid erosion may reduce your teeth to a point where the only option available is to crown them.

For cosmetic reasons, to improve the aesthetics of your smile, you may opt for all porcelain cosmetic crowns.

### Are dental crowns always the best option?

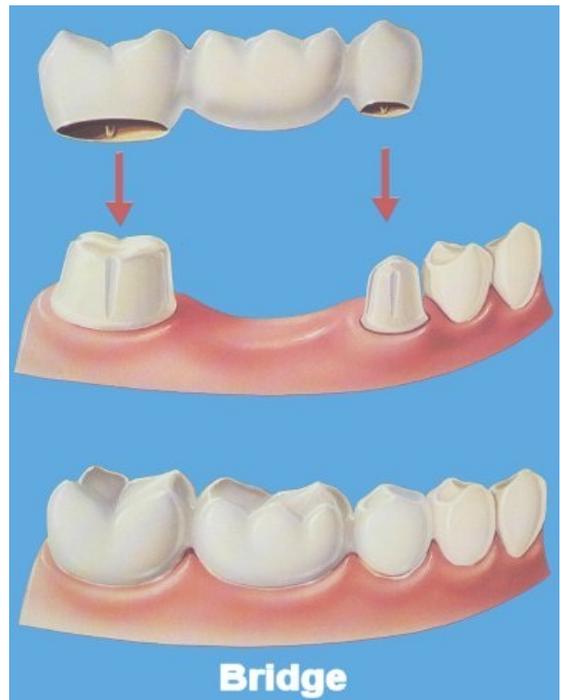
Crowns should not be the first choice just to improve the aesthetics of your teeth, because a dentist needs to grind a significant portion of the original tooth away. Less invasive alternatives include veneers or dental bonding. Crowns are required when the strength of the tooth supporting the restoration is compromised, since veneers and dental bonding restorations are only as strong as the supporting tooth.

### What materials can crowns be made from?

In modern-day dentistry, there is a wide variety of dental materials to choose from. Some crowns are made from full gold, where as others are made from an alloy of metals fused to a porcelain outer shell. After time, crowns that are made from a combination of metal fused to porcelain can begin to show dark gum lines that are not aesthetically attractive. All-porcelain or -ceramic crowns are the best choice for a natural cosmetic look. There are many different brands and types of porcelain crowns, and the variation between the costs of dental crowns at different dental practices may well reflect the quality of the materials used.

### What does the procedure of having dental crowns fitted involve?

Once you have had a consultation with your dentist and discussed all the treatment options, he/she will prepare the tooth for crowning. The first stage is to clean the tooth, remove any decay and reshape it using a burr (a special dental drill for shaping teeth) under local anesthesia. The shape of the prepared tooth is usually tapered to allow the crown sit comfortably over the top of it. Once the tooth is prepared, an impression (mould) of your teeth will be taken using special "dental putty". This impression is sent to a dental laboratory, which will use the impression of the prepared tooth as a guide to fabricate the new crown to fit perfectly. It usually takes between three to four weeks for a laboratory technician to custom-fabricate your new crown. During this time, your dentist will fit you with a temporary crown to cover and protect your prepared tooth.



On your second visit, your dentist will remove the temporary crown and roughen the outer surface of your prepared tooth with a special etching acid to give the dental cement a good surface to bond to. Your dentist will sit the crown over your tooth to see if it fits with your smile correctly and is the right colour and shape. Once you are both happy with the restoration and how it looks, your dentist will cement the crown firmly into place.

### How long do crowns last?

This will depend largely on how well you look after your teeth. Dental crowns require the same level of care and attention as your natural teeth. Provided you have a good oral hygiene program, attend regular checkups at your dentist, don't grind your teeth, maintain a tooth-kind diet and don't do things like open beer bottles with your teeth, a high-quality dental crown can last 10-15 years.